Agency IT Overview

The Public Service Commission is comprised of three commissioners who are elected on a statewide basis to six year terms that are staggered. The Commission is authorized to maintain a staff of 41 full-time employees.

The Commission fulfills its statutory mandates by protecting the public interest and regulating utilities, mining companies, and licensees in a fair, efficient, responsive, and cooperative manner. Regulatory initiatives assure that:

Utility customers receive reliable and safe service at reasonable rates from financially sound companies.

Mined coal lands are reclaimed to provide a safe and productive environment now and in the future.

License and permit holders and operators of commercial weighing and measuring devices operate in a safe and fair manner.

The Commission has seven divisions, each of which has distinct areas of responsibility. These divisions and responsibilities are:

Public Utilities Division - Regulate telecommunications, natural gas, and electric utilities and oversee siting applications for energy generation and transmission facilities.

Testing & Safety Division - Monitor the accuracy of commercial weighing and measuring devices that are used throughout the state and monitor the operations of energy distribution pipelines to promote public safety.

Licensing Division - License and regulate public grain warehouses, roving grain and hay buyers, auctioneers and auction clerks, railroads to the extent provided for by state law and represent North Dakota's rail shipping interests in federal proceedings and in direct negotiations with rail carriers.

Reclamation Division - Issue permits to companies that are proposing to conduct coal mining activities in the state and monitor subsequent mining activities to ensure compliance with North Dakota's reclamation laws.

Abandoned Mine Lands Division - Use available federal funds to identify and prioritize hazards associated with pre-reclamation law mine sites in North Dakota, develop construction designs to minimize or eliminate the greatest hazards, and hire contractors to undertake related work.

Legal Division - Provide the Commission and its various divisions with legal counsel; assist the Commission in the adjudication of cases filed with the Commission and represent the Commission in other jurisdictional cases that are subsequently appealed to the courts.

Accounting Division - Administer the agency's day-to-day activities including budgeting, accounting, grant administration and procurement, and provide data processing systems and services to all agency personnel and divisions.

Agency IT Plan Contact Data

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Agency Technology Goals And Objectives

Goal 1. Use of high-end, specialized scientific and engineering software (including AutoCAD and GIS) provided by the federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM) and expanding the use of remote sensing and image analysis.

Objective(s)

- Coordinate with engineers and scientists from OSM, Industry Task Force, and the PSC.
- Maintain and enhance acceptable and effective tools.
- Meet legal and technical requirements of state and federal statutes and rules.
- Meet software licensing requirements.
- Plan maintenance and installation around schedules of high cost professionals.
- Maximize quality.

Goal 2. Economical management and storage of large numbers of graphics files.

Objective(s)

- Storage is allocated in discussion and agreement with end users on the basis of volatility, archive requirements, speed, and reliability.
- Ensure least cost and best match solution.
- When economically feasible and technically practical, utilize ITD standard products.
- When practical, leverage ITD's licensing, systems, and expertise.

Goal 3. Conversion of all PSC documents and data to digital format (ongoing, to ease physical storage, make data more usable and support automated work flow to increase efficiency).

Objective(s)

- Work with administrative personnel, engineers, scientists from OSM, Industry, PSC, and ITD to find a solution which will accommodate all necessary information, integrate into federal, state, and industry systems and allow data from each to seamlessly integrate into the whole.
- Integrate the existing case management system and databases into the workflow system.
- When economically feasible and technically practical, utilize ITD standard products.

- When practical, leverage ITD's licensing, systems, and expertise.

Goal 4. End-user team development of integrated agency-wide database and workflow system.

Objective(s)

- Provide IT support and interaction with ongoing agency systems management project team composed of non-IT end-users and administrators to re-design how the PSC will do business in the 21st century (This is an agency business analysis project).
- When economically feasible and technically practical, utilize ITD standard products.
- When practical, leverage ITD's licensing, systems, and expertise.

Goal 5. Weights and Measures Division field usage of IT technology.

Objective(s)

- Monitor and refine current field usage processes with inspectors.
- Maintain a workable, automated process in collaboration with inspectors.
- Identify systems, hardware and software that integrate with current systems, industry standards, and are field deployable.
- When economically feasible and technically practical, utilize ITD licensing, systems, and expertise.

Goal 6. Electronic permitting (conceived in 1996, implemented in 1999; involved fast interaction between PSC and industry users designing the system. PSC needed to match industry ability to test, buy, and use cheap, effective hardware and software with end-user decision-making flexibility).

Objective(s)

- Work with administrative personnel, engineers and scientists from OSM and Industry who design the process. The PSC will continue to enhance solutions which will accommodate all necessary information, integrate into federal, state, and industry systems and allow data from each to seamlessly integrate into the whole.
- Meet all state and federal requirements for proper submission of a permit.
- Rapid procurement of hardware and software for compatibility with e-permit usage and format.
- When economically feasible and technically practical, utilize ITD standard products.
- When practical, leverage ITD's licensing, systems, and expertise.

Goal 7. Use of specialized technical software needed by one or more professionals.

Objective(s)

- Day to day interactions with administrative personnel, engineers and scientists, OSM and Industry who utilize the applications.
- When economically feasible and technically practical, utilize ITD standard products.
- When practical, leverage ITD's licensing, systems, and expertise.

Goal 8. Ongoing maintenance and enhancement of web-based e-transfer of hydrologic data between Industry and PSC.

Objective(s)

- Meet regularly with engineers and scientists from OSM, Industry task force, other state agencies, and PSC to find the most appropriate solution.
- Leverage current PSC, Water Commission, and ITD infrastructure to create a fully functional, minimal cost, state, federal, and industry integrated hydrologic submission system.
- Utilize existing Water Commission web interface for public, industry, and governmental study.
- When economically feasible and technically practical, utilize ITD standard products.
- When practical, leverage ITD's licensing, systems, and expertise.

Goal 9. Maintenance and enhancement of mine permitting system based on always-up-to-date queries/reports of databases shared by industry and the PSC (future project envisioned as evolving from e-transfer of data to PSC over the next five years).

Objective(s)

- Meet regularly with engineers and scientists from OSM, Industry task force, other government agencies, and PSC to find the most appropriate solution.
- Leverage current PSC, other state agencies, and ITD infrastructure to create a fully functional, minimal cost, and state, federal, and industry integrated data management system.
- Meet all state and federal requirements for legal submission of a permit.
- Rapid procurement of hardware and software for compatibility with e-permit usage and format.
- When economically feasible and technically practical, utilize ITD standard products.
- When practical, leverage ITD's licensing, systems, and expertise.

Goal 10. Timely communication with business partners (primarily e-mail document transfer and lost ability to modify web server).

Objective(s)

- Work with administrative personnel, engineers and scientists from OSM, Industry who designs the process, other government agencies and ITD to find a solution that will accommodate all necessary information.
- Integrate into federal, state and industry systems and allow data from each to seamlessly integrate into the whole.
- Meet all state and federal requirements for legal submission of reports, data, maps, and plans needed for permits.
- Allow appropriate size documents and data to be transferred electronically.
- Determine needed storage size and necessary retention in mail system.
- When economically feasible and technically practical, utilize ITD standard products.
- When practical, leverage ITD's licensing, systems, and expertise.

Goal 11. In-house software training by OSM.

Objective(s)

- Identify necessary hardware and software for training course.
- Utilize software versions and methods agreed upon by OSM, Industry, and the PSC.
- Rapid acquisition of hardware, software, and licensing for compatibility with the PSC and OSM licensing.
- Set up temporary classroom facilities with hardware and software specific to mining with course work integrating state and federal resources as appropriate.

Goal 12. The agency will have well-documented procedures for the programs it develops.

Objective(s)

- Maintain and enhance well-documented procedures and programs that are consistently applied.
- Regularly review and update procedures.
- Provide necessary documentation on deployed applications.

Goal 13. Prepare IT Plan.

- Objective(s)
- To meet legislative mandate.

Goal 14. The agency will maintain data that are accurate, consistent and easily accessible to the public.

Objective(s)

- Continue to advocate internet connectivity as a technical tool and promote electronic sharing of information.
- Continue development of Commission's web site. Site must have current, accurate and useful information for the public and regulated industries.
- Create infrastructure necessary to allow better public access to Commission information.
- Define, execute, and regularly test disaster recovery plan for all systems.
- Continue to accept all electronic coal mine permit applications, and work with industry and the public to accept more applications electronically.
- Implement all changes and new systems with E-government support as a critical element.
- Conversion of paper documents to support use and accessibility.

Goal 15. The agency will use the electronic records as the legal document.

- Objective(s)
- Review and revise Commission administrative rules regarding electronic records following ITD's rules and guidelines.
- Review and update mechanisms and administrative rules for electronic submission of legal documents.

1. If applicable, describe the reason for any extraordinary increase or decrease in your infrastructure costs.
Please see narrative.

2. Total number of desktop computers: 42
Number of desktops for which you are requesting replacement funding: 30
Average replacement cost/desktop: 1,528

3. Total number of laptop computers: 10
Number of laptops for which you are requesting replacement funding: 6
Average replacement cost/laptop: 1,880

What state planning region are these desktop/laptop computers located?

Region 1	0	**2**	0	**3**	0	**4**	0	**5**	0	**6**	0	**7**	52	**8**	0

4. What percentage of these pcs are running the following operating systems:
(total should be equal to 100%)

Windows 98	0 **%**
Windows NT	0 **%**
Windows 2000	2 **%**
Windows XP	97 **%**
Other	1 **%**

5. What additional expenditures are being paid out of non-appropriated funds?
Please explain:

Agency Technology Activities
Due to extraordinary Commission needs during the 2005-2007 biennium, funds were reallocated among IT line items and from the IT equipment line to T&S equipment. These reallocations required substantial sacrifices in IT they are not sustainable in the future. The reallocation is discussed in each of the line item explanations below and in the IT Equipment over $5000.

IT-5510 (IT equipment under $5,000) while indicating a substantial increase it is actually only a moderate increase over the 2005-2007 biennium appropriation. This line was reduced to fund network upgrades for the 13th floor and to provide funding for ITD programming charges for the telecom registration application. The reductions are approximately:

$20,000 was moved to 6010 (IT Data Processing) for programming costs of the telecom registration application.
$12,000 to offset IT 6010 (IT Data Processing) to support ongoing monthly network port, email, and telecom application charges.
$11,000 to offset IT 6010 (IT Data Processing) to support network infrastructure upgrage charges.

Additionally IT funding for the federal reclamation programs increased by approximately $20,000. Over the past 8 years, the Reclamation Division has on the average received

approximately $10,000 per year worth of equipment and software from the federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM) to support electronic permitting, GIS, mobile computing, and other new technologies. OSM's Office of Technology Transfer for the western region previously had funds to purchase IT hardware and software for these initiatives. However, OSM will no longer provide this equipment and software at no cost to the State to support the development of new technologies as they have in the past. Therefore, the Commission is including additional funds in the Reclamation Division's operating budget for specialized software and hardware for supporting and adding new technology during the 2007-09 biennium. The possible equipment needs include new or replacement tablet pc's for mine inspections, digital cameras, GPS units, and other related equipment.

The Commission is comprised of highly technical positions including scientists, engineers, rate analysts and other technical staff. This work requires a higher percentage of high performance desktops and workstations for functions such as modeling and engineering. Therefore, the average cost per PC and laptop is higher than normal and the replacement schedule is shorter.

IT-6010 (IT Data Processing) increased due to greater network capabilities and increased costs for email storage, Connect ND, Application Server, and required application updates. These increases total approximately 31,000.

IT-6020 (IT Communications) is a rate increase only.

IT-6030 (IT Contractual) is due to cost increases only

IT-6093 (IT over $5,000) $20,000 was transferred to non-IT equipment, $13,000 of the funds were used to support the emergency purchase of Weights and Measures equipment and $7,000 were used to supplement the Commission hearing room sound system project.

		CURRENT APPROPRIATION	BUDGET REQUEST	OPTIONAL ADJUSTMENTS	REQUEST PLUS OPTIONALS	SUBSEQUENT BIENNIUM
IT5110	SALARIES - PERMANENT	$0	$205,958	$0	$205,958	$0
IT5111	ADDITIONAL SALARIES	$205,958	$0	$98,400	$98,400	$304,358
IT5160	FRINGE BENEFITS	$0	$62,218	$0	$62,218	$0
IT5161	ADDITIONAL FRINGE BENEFITS	$62,218	$0	$30,340	$30,340	$92,558
IT5310	IT SOFTWARE AND SUPPLIES	$54,460	$47,779	$16,000	$63,779	$63,779
IT5510	IT EQUIPMENT UNDER $5000	$41,801	$76,628	$11,000	$87,628	$87,628
IT6010	IT DATA PROCESSING	$101,521	$113,253	$24,000	$137,253	$137,253
IT6020	IT COMMUNICATIONS	$47,100	$55,450	$300	$55,750	$55,750
IT6030	IT CONTRACT SERVICES & REPAIRS	$28,600	$35,900	$10,500	$46,400	$46,400
IT6930	IT EQUIPMENT OVER $5000	$43,011	$32,500	$10,000	$42,500	$42,500
ITS101	IT FTE COUNT	$2	$0	$1	$1	$1
ITS102	VACANT FTE	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
	Total Budget:	**$584,671**	**$629,686**	**$200,541**	**$830,227**	**$830,227**
001	STATE GENERAL FUND	$366,394	$480,857	$200,540	$681,397	$681,397
R030	GAS PIPELINE SAFETY PROGRAM	$50	$50	$0	$50	$50
R034	ND PERMANENT PROGRAM	$12,267	$34,403	$0	$34,403	$34,403
R999	INDIRECT COST RECOVERY	$205,958	$114,376	$0	$114,376	$114,376
	Total Funding:	**$584,671**	**$629,686**	**$200,541**	**$830,227**	**$830,227**